

I Claim:

1. An impartial electronic matchmaking method that introduces buyers to sellers of products and services that can be identified by digital representations of machine-readable identification tags or symbols (MRID), where the nucleus of the system is a software application that resides on a server attached to the Internet, referred to as the Shopper Assistant Portal (SAP), working in conjunction with a software application that can be compiled to run on any terminal-device that is capable of accessing the Internet directly or indirectly, with the users of the terminal-devices being referred to as Shoppers, and software that resides on servers that are also connected to the Internet belonging to individual Merchants of products and/or services, where the Shoppers choose the geographical area they want to shop in and the Merchants choose the geographical area they want to cater-to, comprising the steps of:

the said Shopper electronically collecting into memory storage one or a plurality of MRID numbers, in one or several sessions, that are saved into a database utilizing one or more of the established methods of data collection (barcode, punch-card, RFID, audio, and image processing) devices that can be an intricate part of the terminal-device or interfaced to the terminal-device, where multiple collections of the same ID would increment the Quantity field instead of creating a new record;

upon said Shopper's command, electronically connecting the terminal-device to the Shopper Assistant Portal, the Shopper Assistant Portal maintaining information relating to a plurality of merchants and a plurality of products and/or services offered by the plurality of merchants;

establishing an Active-List by the said Shopper selecting and uploading one of the possible pluralities of MRID databases from the terminal-device to the Shopper Assistant Portal;

software on the Shopper Assistant Portal processes the said Active-List by matching each record in the said Active-List with the associated data of each product or service, thereby updating the said Active-List with the current data that consist of at least the basic description;

downloading from the Shopper Assistant Portal the updated version of the said Active-List to the terminal-device to be examined and possibly modified by the said Shopper;

at the said Shopper's command to Shop, the said Active-List is uploaded to the Shopper Assistant Portal, where software on the Shopper Assistant Portal processes the said Active-List by matching each record in the said Active-List where the Quantity field is greater than zero, with Merchants that offer the

products or services and cater-to the area determined by the said Shopper, creating a database file that contains every Merchant that caters to the said Shopper's specified area and offer one or more of the products and/or services in the said Active-List with the said database file referred to as a Merchant-List;

downloading the said Merchant-List to the terminal-device from the Shopper Assistant Portal and displaying at least the name of one Merchant in the said Merchant-List on the terminal-device to be examined by the said Shopper, whereby the said Shopper selects one of the Merchants from the said Merchant-List, initiating software on the said Shopper's terminal-device, notifying the Shopper Assistant Portal of the said Shopper's selection;

software on the Shopper Assistant Portal processes the said Shopper's request by generating a data-package that includes among other data, the said Active-List, then electronically send the said data-package to a URL that has been specified by the selected Merchant;

software on the said selected Merchant's server processes the said data-package and establishes a session with the said Shopper, whereby the said Shopper interacts directly with said Merchant through a user interface designed and maintained by the said Merchant, whereby the said Shopper may purchase or order one or more of the products and/or services from the said Merchant utilizing a point-of-sale system specified by the said Merchant;

upon the termination of the said session between the said Shopper and the said Merchant, software on the said Merchant's server modifies the said Active-List by adjusting the Quantity field(s) in accordance with the said session, then electronically sends a data-package that includes among other data, the said modified Active-List, to the Shopper Assistant Portal, where the said Active-List is processed by software on the Shopper Assistant Portal to determine if there are any records where the Quantity field is greater than zero;

if the said Active-List contains any records where the Quantity field is greater than zero, software on the Shopper Assistant Portal processes the said Active-List by matching each record where the Quantity field is greater than zero with Merchants that offer the product or service and cater-to the area determined by the said Shopper, creating a new Merchant-List, then downloading to the said Shopper's terminal-device, the said Active-List, and the said new Merchant-List, where the said Shopper could select another Merchant, or Function that includes Quitting;

however, if the said Active-List contains no records where the Quantity field is greater than zero, the Shopper Assistant Portal will download the said Active-List and a message to be displayed on the said Shopper's terminal-device notifying the said Shopper that the said Active-List contains no records where the Quantity field is greater than zero, giving the said Shopper the option to select another Function that includes Quitting.

2. When the said Shopper of Claim 1 initiates a session with more than one Merchant at a time, the Shopper Assistant Portal saves a copy of the said Active-List uniquely for each Merchant that the said Shopper is in session with.

3. Merchants of products and services in Claim 1 become members of the Shopper Assistant Portal by:

agreeing to a licensing agreement;

requesting, installing and configuring software supplied by the operator of the Shopper Assistant Portal;

stating the geographical area that the merchant wants to cater-to;

select one or more of the plurality of products and/or services that the merchant wants to offer;

establishing and specifying a URL address that the Shopper Assistant Portal shall communicate through;

uploading a data-package to the Shopper Assistant Portal that includes among other data, the offered products and/or services, cater-to area, and the URL address that the Shopper Assistant Portal shall communicate through.

4. Merchants of products and services in Claim 3 may modify their list of offered products and services daily.

5. Merchants of products and services in Claim 3 may modify the geographical area that they want to cater-to daily.

6. Merchants of products and services in Claim 3 pay a periodic flat fee to the operator of the Shopper Assistant Portal based on the population of the area the Merchant wants to cater-to, and the number of products and services the Merchant is offering.

7. Shoppers using the terminal-device in Claim 1 become members of the Shopper Assistant Portal by:

agreeing to a licensing agreement;  
requesting, installing and configuring the Shopper Assistant Portal software application;  
determine the geographical area to shop in;  
begin using the system.

8. The member Shoppers using terminal-devices in Claim 7 pay dues similar to the dues people pay periodically to brick-and-mortar shopping clubs, such as Sam's Club™ and Costco®.

9. The member Shoppers using terminal-devices in Claim 7 may have several version of the Shopper Assistant Portal software application for various terminal-devices the said Shopper may have, such as a cell-phone, a personal computer, etc., with the terminal-devices collectively linked to a single membership record of the said Shopper, thereby permitting the said member Shopper to use the service with a variety of terminal-devices.

10. The dues paid by the member Shoppers in Claim 8 are paid to a non-for profit agency.

11. The non-for profit agency of Claim 10 would distribute one hundred percent of the net dues received from the member Shoppers to other non-for profit agencies that have an established infrastructure for feeding children.

12. The other non-for profit agencies in Claim 11 receive contributions from the non-for profit agency of Claim 10 by agreeing to include the operator of the Shopper Assistant Portal in their marketing.

13. The non-for profit agency of Claim 10 is responsible for:
- human-resources;
  - oversee the penning and enforcement of licenses and agreements;
  - setting of policies and membership dues;
  - membership of Shoppers using the terminal-devices;
  - delivering the Shopper Assistant Portal software application to member Shoppers;
  - customer service;
  - authentication of Shoppers using the terminal-device attempting to establish a session with the Shopper Assistant Portal;
  - research, development, and testing of enhancements to the Shopper Assistant Portal software application that runs on the Shopper's terminal-devices based on comments and suggestions received from member Shoppers;
  - version control for the Shopper Assistant Portal software application for the terminal-devices;
  - notify the operator of the Shopper Assistance Portal and the Merchant each and every time a comment is made by a member Shoppers concerning a Merchant;
  - evaluate the effectiveness of the other non-for profit agencies in Claim 11 that are receiving contributions.

14. The authentication of Shoppers using the terminal-device attempting to establish a session with the Shopper Assistant Portal in Claim 13, is accomplished by the steps of:

- upon the initial command to establish a new session, of electronically connecting the terminal-device to the Shopper Assistance Portal, described in Claim 1 (upon said Shopper's command, electronically connecting the terminal-device to the Shopper Assistant Portal), the Shopper Assistance Portal will communicate with a server maintained by the non-for profit agency of Claim 10 electronically to validate that the said Shopper is a member in good standings;

- if the authentication system maintained by the non-for profit agency of Claim 10 approves the said Shopper's membership, the session continues between the said Shopper and the Shopper Assistance Portal as described in Claim 1;

if the authentication system maintained by the non-for profit agency of Claim 10 rejects the said Shopper's membership, software on the server maintained by the non-for profit agency of Claim 10 notifies the Shopper Assistance Portal, triggering software on the Shopper Assistance Portal to redirect the said Shopper using the terminal-device to a URL that the non-for profit agency of Claim 10 has established to interact with the said Shopper allowing the said Shopper to renew his or her membership as well as responding to other customer service and membership issues.

15. The Merchant-List of Claim 1 can be sorted by the number (count) of products and/or services the Merchant offers that are in the said Active-List of Claim 1 as a primary sort with an alphabetical listing by Merchant name as the secondary sort, whereas if the said Active-List contains only one record, the said Merchant-List of Claim 1 will be sorted in alphabetical order by Merchant name.

16. The said Shopper of Claim 1 may procure the products and/or services in the said Active-List through one or a plurality of the said Merchants in the said Merchant-List, in one or a plurality of sessions.

17. The machine-readable identification tags or symbols (MRID) of Claim 1 could be the Universal Product Code (UPC barcode) that is printed on almost all of the packaged retail products worldwide.